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ABSTRACT

Case-based pedagogy as a strategy to effectively weave theory, practice, and problem-solving in preservice teacher preparation has resulted in a national team case competition. Teams of preservice teachers from five teacher preparation institutions were invited to the University of Virginia to independently solve a classroom dilemma, present a written analysis, and prepare an oral presentation and defense. This paper describes the experience of an educational psychologist in mentoring and preparing one team of undergraduate preservice teachers (who had gained preliminary experience in solving case study dilemmas through an educational psychology course), selected for the national competition. Coaching techniques encouraged the preservice teachers to cooperate, to compete, to develop individual areas of expertise, and to access computers, reference, and faculty resources in solving case dilemmas. Collaboration strategies, skills, and resources developed are illustrated, and the paper concludes with implications for connecting education and human resources within and beyond teacher preparation programs. (Contains 16 references.) (LL)

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ED 374 124

Education and Human Resources:
Putting the Pieces Together

Mentoring and Collaborating with Cases: Developing the Skills and Resources to Compete in a National Case Competition

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Mentoring and Collaborating with Cases: Developing the Skills and Resources to Compete in a National Case Competition

Abstract

This session presents an educational psychologist's experiences in mentoring a team of undergraduate preservice teachers selected for a national team case competition. Team members had gained preliminary experience in solving case study dilemmas through case-based teaching in their undergraduate educational psychology class. Collaboration strategies, skills, and resources developed are illustrated. Implications for connecting education and human resources within and beyond teacher preparation programs are drawn.

Mentoring and Collaborating with Cases: Developing the Skills and Resources to Compete in a National Case Competition

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Introduction

Case-based teaching as a strategy to effectively weave theory, practice, and problem-solving in preservice teacher preparation has attracted the interest of teacher ed ors, researchers, education associations and practitioners alike. One result of this interest in case-based pedagogy and research has been a national team case competition sponsored, in part, by the Association of Teacher Educators, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, and the National Education Association. Teams of preservice teachers from five teacher preparation institutions were invited to The University of Virginia to independently solve a case of a classroom dilemma, present a written analysis, and prepare an oral presentation and defense.

Preparing To Compete

Participants were five preservice teachers selected to compete in the Commonwealth Center Invitational Team Case Competition, held at the University of Virginia in May,1993. Four teams (The University of Calgary, The University of Dayton, The University of Hawaii, and The University of Vermont) were invited to compete in this national preservice case competition against a defending championship team (Hampton University). Teams were chosen on the basis of their diversity, the strength of their application proposal, and familiarity with the case study method. This team consisted of one senior, two juniors and two sophomores with representation by four Caucasians and one African-American, and was composed of one male and four female students. This author, an educational psychologist, was their team advisor. The senior and junior preservice teachers had prior experience with the case study method in their sophomore level educational psychology course, *EDT 208: Teaching and Learning*. The sophomores were currently engaged in case-based teaching in that course.

As part of their preparation for the team competition, this group of preservice teachers met on a regular basis to discuss case dilemmas and practice their problen

solving skills. Their advisor coached them on collaboration, strategic planning, applications of theory to practice, accessing reference and ERIC resources, as well as written analysis and oral presentation considerations. Because the case competition proposal guidelines emphasized diversity, additional efforts were expended to prepare for a case study dealing with diversity issues. The team read and discussed articles on "star" teachers in urban schools (Haberman, 1992), the pedagogy of poverty (Haberman, 1991) and reviewed the multicultural chapter in Woolfolk (1993) as well as the current edition of *Educational Psychology 93/94*.

To familiarize invited teams with competition expectations, the Commonwealth Center sent a video of selected proceedings from the prior year's competition, the competition judging criteria, and a written copy of last year's case dilemma, an issue in diversity. The team members read the case individually and met together for a "dry run" in brainstorming and solving the dilemma. This one hour session was tape recorded so that the advisor and team members could review individual and collaborative perceptions, input and thinking processes. The session was lively, thoughtful and showed skillful organization. An unexpected outcome was the valuable input given by the African-American student about the typical range of defensive attitudes and behaviors exhibited by minority students in stressful school situations, behaviors that could be (and were) misinterpreted in this case by the other team members. The team at that point realized that diversity not only needed to be read about and talked about, but, for them, vicariously experienced in context with an informed guide. Having good intentions, it appears, may not be sufficient to develop the skills and sensitivity to deal fairly with students from differing cultures, backgrounds and/or school experiences and expectations. This incident marked the turning point in solidifying a "team" approach to examining and analyzing classroom dilemmas.

Individual team members assumed responsibility for areas of expertise (i.e. behavior management, portfolios, cooperative learning, development etc.) and assigned tasks (reference, computer, paper organization, presentation) to assure a smooth transition to the competition. Additionally, they challenged and extended their theoretical and practical expertise as a team by "sitting in" and participating in case-based problem solving, facilitated by their advisor, in an Honors/Scholars section of EDT 208.

At the competition, the advisor's role shifted again from that of teacher and mentor to coach. The day of the competition was grueling as the teams of preservice teachers struggled over 8 hours to analyze the case, research their solutions, and write and type a case analysis. That evening this team spent another marathon session with their advisor as they prepared for their 50 minute oral defense the next day.

A Review of the Process

From inspiration to action

(1) Who me?!! Compete? (Selecting for personal qualities and diversity)

(2) Acknowledging what we do and what we know about case-based teaching. (Conducting a case use survey)

(3) Collaboratively writing the proposal (A mentor-mentee enterprise)

Practice, practice, practice!

(4) Connecting learning theory to classroom practices. (Implementing cases)

(5) The impact of prior knowledge, history and experiences on case solutions. (Discovering multiple interpretations)

(6) Learning to cooperate to compete. (Astonishment ... and empowerment)

The acid test

(7) Competing: The ambiguity of competition. (What does it mean?)

(8) Winning and losing. (Putting things in perspective)

(9) Learning from each other. (Conducting yet another survey)

(10) Next steps. (Reflecting, writing, presenting, planning)

Summary and Conclusions

This presentation has shared a faculty advisor's experiences in mentoring and preparing a team of five undergraduate preservice teachers selected for the most recent case team competition. In addition to fine-tuning professional research, writing, and oral presentation skills, the personal attributes and strengths of individual team members were acknowledged and developed. Team members were encouraged to "cooperative to compete" and to develop individual areas of expertise, using Woolfolk's *Educational Psychology* text as their basic resource manual. Additionally, they learned how to access computer, reference, and faculty resources in solving case dilemmas. As a result of this process, preservice feelings of competence and empowerment soared with their ability to collaborate, strategically plan, problem-solve, and reach consensus on case solutions. Not only does case-based teaching enhance the educational psychology curriculum through "hands on" applications of theory to practice, but it also contributes to personal and professional growth of preservice teachers and faculty as they seek effective solutions to the common and complex dilemmas found in today's classrooms.

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